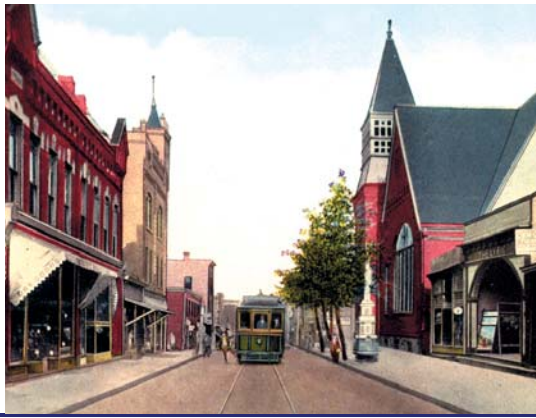


WINTER 2017

NORWIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY



We preserve our local history, promote the history of the Norwin Community and embrace the opportunity to educate the Community about the people, places and events that comprise the history of Irwin, North Irwin, and North Huntingdon Township.

Did You Know?

THE GREAT STORM OF NOVEMBER, 1950 Along the Lincoln Highway

By Bob Cupp

The record snow storm of November, 1950 produced lifelong memories for those who experienced it first-hand. It was particularly memorable for residents of the Norwin-Lincoln Highway corridor, where the community housed hundreds of travelers stranded by the severe weather. The Irwin area received extensive national publicity from the new medium of television for the hospitality and kindness displayed by its residents.

From the opening of the Pennsylvania Turnpike in 1940 until November, 1951, Irwin was the toll road's western terminus. All westbound traffic exited onto the Lincoln Highway at that point. The 4-lane road had been constructed to provide access to the Turnpike, and served as the primary east – west thruway. The 20-mile stretch between Irwin and Pittsburgh flourished commercially with the large volume of traffic.



Snow began to fall Friday morning, the day after Thanksgiving. Cars, trucks and buses exiting the turnpike became stuck on the hills at Jacktown and Stewartville. Most of them were from out of town – people returning home from visiting relatives for Thanksgiving and truckers back on the road after the holiday.

Traffic quickly backed-up into Irwin. Although tire chains were common in those days, chains were no match for the rapid snow accumulation – almost 30 inches in some places with strong wind gusts producing drifts as high as 5 feet. Vehicles were abandoned in the middle of the road when motorists sought shelter from the cold.

Photos of "The Great Storm" courtesy of the Norwin Public Library.

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THE GREAT STORM (continued)



A hot meal.



Truck drivers sleeping.

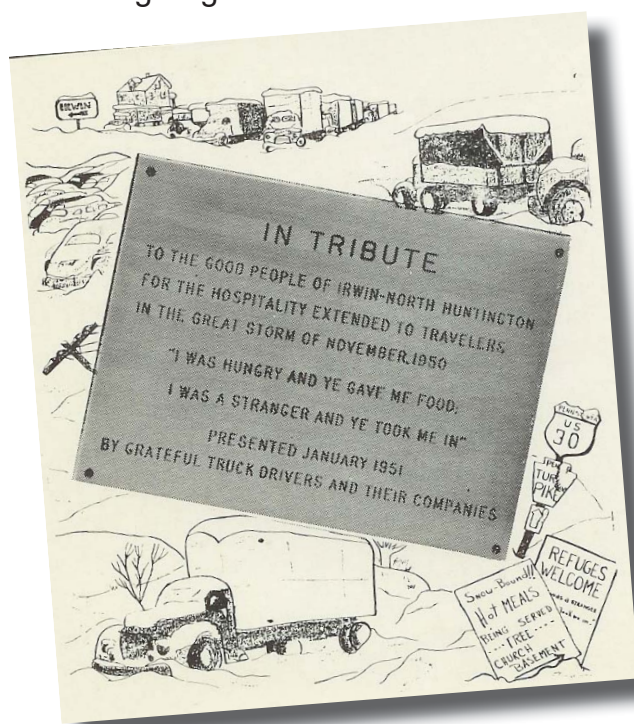


Trucks at a standstill.

By the time darkness arrived, traffic had come to a complete standstill; many cars had run out of gas. Recognizing that people could freeze to death if left in their cars all night, the residents invited the snow-bound motorists into their homes. It was a bad situation that brought out the best in people.

Irwin area churches opened their doors to the stranded travelers. They offered free meals and a place to sleep until the roads were cleared several days later. Local merchants donated food to provide for the hungry. There were countless stories of Good Samaritans helping those in need of food and shelter.

The snow finally subsided Saturday evening, but it wasn't sufficiently cleared to allow any of the travelers to be on their way before Monday. For many years, area residents received letters of thanks and memories from the families who stayed with them that Thanksgiving weekend.



A plaque was presented in January 1951 by grateful truck drivers and their companies: In tribute to the good people of Irwin – North Huntingdon for the

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hospitality extended to travelers in the great storm of November, 1950. "I was hungry and ye gave me food; I was a stranger and ye took me in."

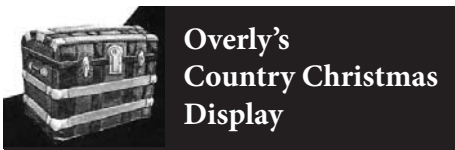
Owen O. Orr, President of Motor Cargo, Inc., an Akron, Ohio trucking company, expressed the feelings of the drivers: "Certainly the men who drive the trucks and the rest of us in the trucking industry too, are convinced that it's a pretty swell community of people – that town of Irwin, at the western end of the Turnpike."



Evangelical & Reformed Church



Snow removal!



For the second year in a row, the Norwin Historical Society is taking part in a display at the Overly's Country Christmas event. This holiday season, we celebrate travel! A round-top travel trunk, donated by the Caruthers family, has "J. Irwin, Irwin Station, PRR" written on the side. In the trunk are items the travelers might have taken with them, such as a man's shaving set and a 19th century Bible. A travel map shows the railroad route from Philadelphia to Colorado and the stagecoach loop at the end of the R.R. line. Included is a photo of a stagecoach preparing to leave with a group of travelers and an illustrated copy of the History of Westmoreland County: Genealogical Memoirs (1906).



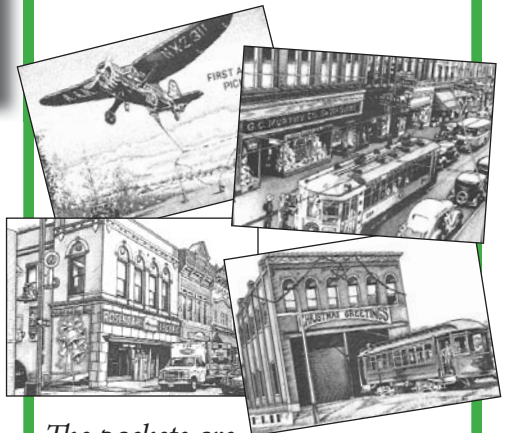
20 Years of Historic NOTECARDS

ON SALE IN IRWIN

For 20 years, the Irwin Business & Professional Association has produced packets of notecards highlighting historical people, places, and things. The beautiful images have been meticulously illustrated by Bob Weaver.

This year, the packets contain two cards each of the following:

- *First Airmail Delivery to Irwin*
- *Streetcar Line Along Main Street*
- *Rosendahl's Appliance Center*
- *Irwin-Herminie Streetcar Barn*



The packets are \$10 and can be purchased at Cheesecake Cafe, Colonial Grill, McFeeley's Gourmet Chocolate, Norwin Chamber of Commerce, Norwin Historical Society, and Wolesslagle Interiors.

NORWIN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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WINTER 2017



*Come visit us
under the
clock tower
during special
downtown events!*

